

Inamine Susumu

All Okinawa Coalition Against New Construction of Henoko Base/ex-Mayor of Nago City

Heart-rending shouts and screams of people resound there today and every day. It is a place where riot police and Coast Guard officers wield their public authority to forcibly remove and restrain protesting citizens, while allowing illegal construction based on the government's arbitrary interpretations of related laws. It is where the overwhelming will of Okinawans and their basic human rights are ignored, and the crises of democracy and local autonomy are apparent; this is the scene unfolding in front of the gate of U.S. Camp Schwab and on the sea of Oura Bay, where the construction of a new U.S. base in Henoko is underway.

This scene also shows the true nature of the Abe administration: how the Liberal Democratic-Komei coalition government has fallen to the lowest state, as vassal and subordinate of the USA, blindly worshiping the Japan-U.S. alliance treaty, lying that they would lessen the burden of US bases on Okinawa, and being spellbound by the view that "the base in Henoko is the only solution." As such, what goes on in Okinawa reveals that Okinawa is an "unaddressed land" where the Constitution is not applied and where "the US forces come first" before everything.

In all recent major elections in Okinawa the candidates who campaigned for the joint "Petition to the Government" opposing the construction of a new U.S. base in Henoko won overwhelming victories. In the prefectural referendum on February 24 this year, 72% of voters expressed their opposition to the construction of the new base. Nevertheless, the day after the referendum the Japanese government unabashedly and ostentatiously resumed construction work. Two days later, Defense Minister Iwaya said at a press conference, "Okinawa has its own democracy, but the nation also has its own democracy." This abominable and outrageous statement should never ever be tolerated.

Despite this situation, five times the Okinawa prefectural government filed a lawsuit in pursuit of a place for consultations and substantial legal deliberation. Each time, however, the court, far from entering into substantial deliberation, turned it down at the door, brown nosing the central government. Thus, the fact that the principle of the separation of three powers is not functioning at all in this country has been thrown into relief.

It must be said that Japan is not a nation under the rule of law but an abandoned nation filled with contradictions. We continue to resist the structural discrimination and absurdity imposed by the powers that be and fight for our cause.

It is 74 years since the end of the war, 47 years since Okinawa's return to Japan, and 23 years since the conclusion of the bilateral agreement to return the U.S. Futenma Base. Why do we need a new base? Why does it have to be in Henoko in Okinawa? Our "whys" continue.

The Henoko base issue is an issue of the Constitution, human rights, and the environment.

It is an issue of democracy and local autonomy.

In that sense, it is no longer an issue of Okinawa alone but of the whole nation.

A move is underway for the "okinawanization" of the whole of Japan. I believe that now is the time for all Japanese citizens to recognize Okinawa's issues as their own and try to deal with them.

We are not presenting unreasonable demands. We are calling for basic human rights which a sovereign and democratic nation must abide by and guarantee, and which every citizen should be able to enjoy.

With the motto, "Nonviolently, undaunted and resiliently - We never give up," our fight continues today, tomorrow, and all the days after tomorrow.